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ABSTRACT

Tacoma Community College (TCC), in Washington, has implemented a comprehensive professional development program to serve the training and development needs of its employees. Program goals include promoting student success through curriculum review and teaching development, increasing opportunities for professional development, building a positive working environment at TCC, and enhancing overall institutional effectiveness. Three major constituent groups provide the ongoing planning for training and development for TCC's professional development program: the faculty professional development committee, the classified staff education and training committee, and the management council. In 1994, TCC established the Teaching/Learning Center to build a resource of materials; provide facilities for research and evaluation of instructional systems; coordinate on-campus faculty development activities; provide video-and teleconferencing, computer network access, and specialized computing resources; organize a system of recognition and rewards for faculty and staff; and support ongoing professional development activities and interest groups. The Teaching/Learning Forum, for example, was created to fulfill faculty need for discussion related to instructional issues and for sharing successful teaching and learning techniques. The Forum's success is evidenced by the fact that participation doubled between its first and second years. Because of the development program and the Teaching/Learning Center, faculty are participating in record numbers and are becoming more involved in campus issues and decision making. (MAB)

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A FACULTY DRIVEN TEACHING & LEARNING CENTER:

THE EVOLUTION OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT VENTURE

By

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Helen Sablan is the Adult Basic Skills Coordinator at Tacoma Community College in Tacoma, Washington. She coordinates the ABE/GED programs on campus and at several sites including the Pierce County Jail, the Tacoma Mall, and the Urban League. Helen has been with TCC for ten years, six of which were as Coordinator of the ABE/GED Program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. She has coordinated and taught in ABE and GED programs on military bases, prisons, and community colleges for the past eighteen years.

At TCC, Helen is very involved in professional development for both full and part- time faculty. She has been instrumental in the successful development of the Teaching/Learning Center and is the coordinator of the Teaching/Learning Forum for staff and faculty. In addition, she coordinates a staff development program for the Para-educators (teacher aides) in the Tacoma School District. At the graduation ceremony for the TCC Class of 1995, Helen was honored with the Faculty of the Year Award of which she is very proud.

Helen has a B.S. from Winthrop College (now University) and a M.Ed. from Boston University. In June, 1995, she completed the Institute for Academic Leadership Development sponsored by the National Community College Chair Academy.

A FACULTY DRIVEN TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER: THE EVOLUTION OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT VENTURE

Background Information

Tacoma Community College is a two-year public college established in 1965 to meet the higher education needs of people residing in the city of Tacoma and the Pierce County portion of the Olympic Peninsula. TCC is dedicated to providing quality educational programs in a dynamic learning environment. The college is accessible, comprehensive, and flexible, and it addresses the personal, professional, and social needs of its diverse population. Currently there are 7300 students enrolled with 3625 FTE's. The human resources of the college consist of 94 full time faculty, 254 part-time faculty, 116 permanent classified staff, 181 part-time hourly staff, 16 exempt professional staff, and 31 full time administrators.

Professional Development Program

Tacoma Community College has a comprehensive professional development program to serve the training and development needs of its employees. The goals of the program are based on the institutional goals of the college which are derived form its mission statement. These goals are:

*To promote student success and instructional excellence through curriculum review and development and teaching innovation;

*To increase professional development opportunities for college employees;

*To build a positive working climate at TCC which includes participatory management, excellent communications, and team building;

*To enhance institutional effectiveness through planning, research, evaluation, and resource development.

Three major constituent groups provide the ongoing planning for training and development for the college professional development program and include: the faculty professional development committee, the classified staff education and training committee, and the management council. The emphasis in this report will be on the faculty professional development committee's role in the development of the Teaching/learning Center and some of its projects. (See attached diagram)

Faculty Professional Development

The college's faculty professional development committee is coordinated by a faculty development coordinator who is given re-assigned time from teaching to direct the program's activities. The coordinator reports directly to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The program is largely directed by faculty which is one of the primary reasons for its success. The coordinator depends on the expertise, talents, and enthusiasm of the committee members to develop a program of activities. The committee is comprised of faculty representatives from each division on campus and three instructional administrators. The committee generates ideas for faculty development, provides direction to the programs, and serves as a communication link between the faculty and the Vice President. Many campus-wide activities have come out of this committee such as the Faculty and Staff Learning Community, the Teaching/Learning Forum, and the Teaching/Learning Center.

The Teaching/Learning Center

The Teaching/Learning Center at TCC in 1994 was a significant milestone for faculty development at the college. The faculty had talked about such an idea and set forth to visit selected Teaching and Learning Centers in the Pacific Northwest. Administrative support was secured and May 31, 1994, marked the ribbon cutting of the Center. The primary mission of the Teaching /Learning Center is to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process at the college. Following are the objectives of the Teaching/Learning Center:

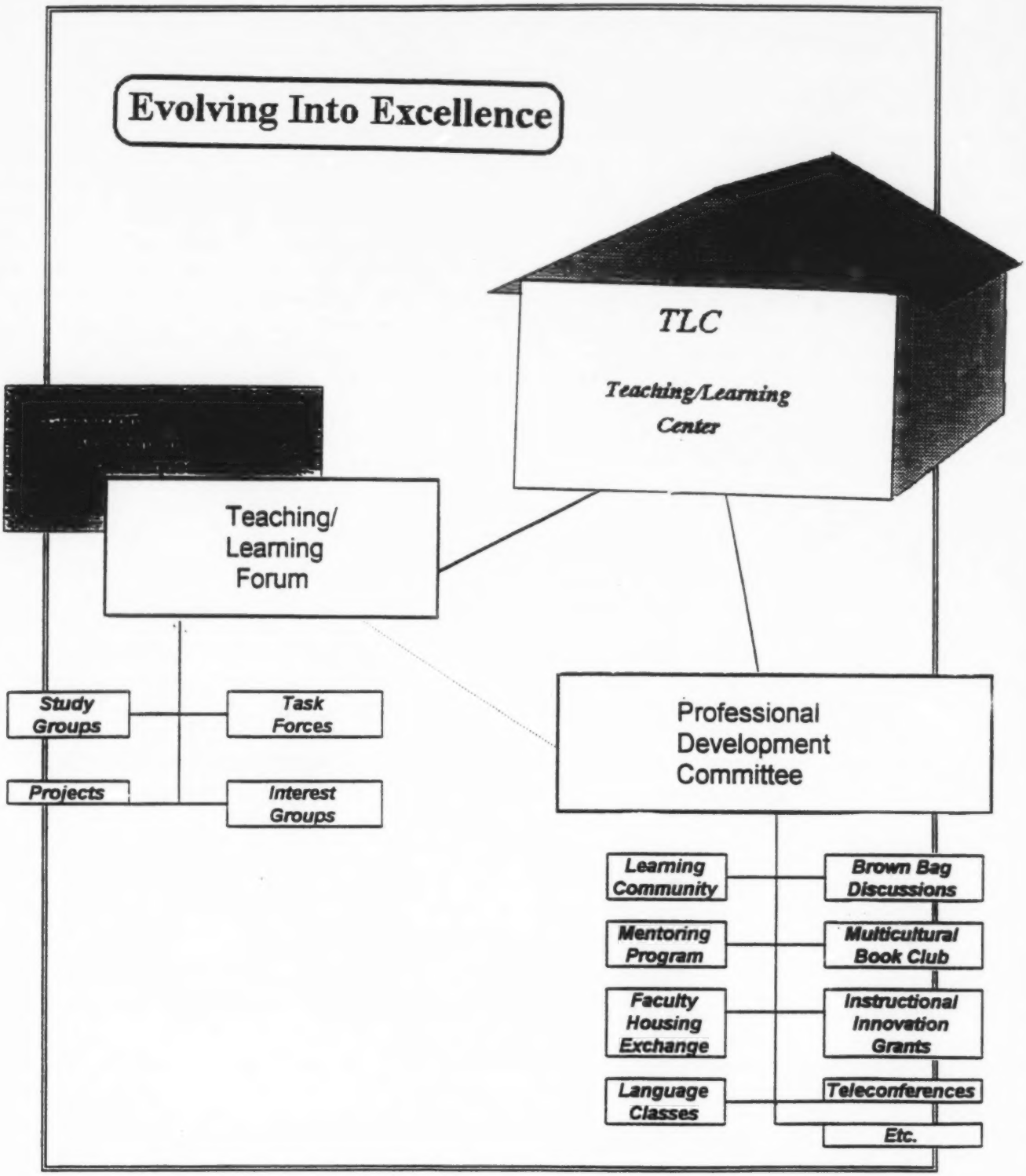
*Build a resource of materials; develop a catalog of proven instructional techniques; research available technologies; provide a bulletin of local and national workshops and other professional activities.
*Provide staff, equipment, and space for researching the application and evaluation of alternative instructional systems (i.e. classroom assessment techniques and writing across the curriculum).
*Coordinate on-campus activities for the benefit of faculty and staff (i.e. seminars, workshops, multicultural and academically diverse issues, and new faculty mentoring program).
*Provide video and teleconferencing facilities.
*Provide specialized computing resources such as document scanning, color printing, desktop publishing, and multi-media presentations.
*Provide communications connections to networks such as Internet, BitNet, and ISAAC.
*Facilitate a system of recognizing and rewarding faculty for accomplishments in professional development and instructional improvement.
*Support professional development activities such as the Teaching/Learning Forum, the Learning Communities, Brown Bag Discussions, Multicultural Book Club, and other ongoing interest groups.

The Teaching/Learning Forum

The Teaching/Learning Forum is a unique aspect of professional development and one that is closely related to the Teaching/Learning Center. The Forum was born out of the need for faculty conversation and discussion about instructional issues and for sharing successful teaching and learning techniques. It first began with a group of faculty interested in classroom assessment, but later blossomed to include discussions on any issue directly related to student success, teaching, and learning. Part-time instructors and instructors at off-campus sites were encouraged to attend, and they have taken an active part. The Forums have been a success as indicated by the doubling of participation from the first to the second year. Prior to the Forum, there was a noticeable lack of a process or group to deal with instructional issues for the larger college community. The Teaching/Learning Forum has met this void in the college processes. Both the faculty and administration use this forum as a basis for college decision making affecting instructional policy, program, and services. In addition, the Forum has provided a time and place for faculty to talk about experiences they are having with teaching and learning. Still another benefit voiced by part-time faculty is the opportunity to meet with full time faculty in discussing these issues.

Summary

Tacoma Community College is very fortunate to have such a variety of professional development activities and great support from administration. Because the Teaching/Learning Center has become the focal point and its director the organizer of these activities, faculty are participating in record numbers and are becoming more involved in campus wide issues and decision making. The TCC Professional Development Program definitely has its strengths. The NCSPOD Institutional Merit Award (for small colleges with less than 4000 FTE) presented to Tacoma Community College at the 1995 NCSPOD Conference is a tribute to the success of the College's professional development efforts and its Teaching/Learning Center.



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